

Editorial

Get it right!

In a democracy, laws are enacted by legislators for what is termed, "the common good." It is expected that society as a whole will benefit from the laws voted into being by the elected representatives of the people.

All well and good - in theory. Occasionally, however, ill-conceived or even poor pieces of legislation either slip through cracks in the system or are thrust on an unsuspecting public by a government that holds a majority of seats in the respective Houses of Parliament.

Regardless, in both scenarios, the public must wallow through the mess while the politico's pat themselves on the back for a job well-done.

Federally, we need look no further than the recently implemented Goods and Services Tax as an example.

At the provincial level, the new Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which became law Jan. 1, is causing equal amounts of consternation.

The law was introduced by the provincial Liberal party when it was in power and now cries are being heard from members of all three major provincial political party's to either rescind the law or alter it drastically.

The original intent of the law was to protect an individual's privacy by prohibiting the release of personal information about the individual, except in special circumstances.

While the intent of the law was laudable, its wording was so imprecise as to leave the legislation open to all sorts of interpretation or even misinterpretation.

Municipal police forces, already handcuffed by countless directives, could find themselves in litigation if the law is interpreted a certain way.

Metropolitan Toronto Police are limiting the information given to the media for just this reason. A number of other Ontario municipal forces are adopting the same stance.

To its credit Halton Region Police, under the guidance of Chief James Harding, are proceeding as they have always done when it comes to releasing information. Chief Harding was quoted as saying, "I abide by the old common-law principle that when a crime is committed it is not just against an individual but against society as a whole. The whole of society has the right to redress and protection."

Another original intention of the law was to further open-up the lines of communication between the police and the community - in effect, the reverse could occur.

For the most part, police forces use discretion when releasing information to the media. This is as it should be. In the same way that the media should use discretion as well.

But a community also has the right to know about the criminal activities in its environs and certain interpretations of this law would deny a community this information.

To legislators both provincially and federally, a suggestion - get it right the first time!

Letter of the Week

Police propaganda

To the Editor:

The Police Propaganda Machine has again successfully nailed down front page coverage in its ongoing program to dupe the media and mislead the public. I refer to the "Concealed Weapon" story on Page 1, Wed., Jan. 2/91 of the Herald.

A little technical knowledge reveals the item carried by the youngster to be an air pistol or "pellet gun" which is the only such item produced in .177 inch calibre. It is not a handgun, not a firearm and not a weapon ... it is an air pistol. What we have here is a youngster playing with an air pistol while both parents were away from home. This is certainly not a desirable situation but it is far from the serious threat to society that the Police Propaganda Machine would have us all believe with phrases like "Remained in Police custody ..." and "Charges are pending ...". The headline could just as easily have read "Police Harass Acton Youth Playing in Yard."

While this may seem petty to criticize this story, I am tired of

groups pursuing their hidden agendas by misrepresenting the facts in order to mislead the public. Unchallenged, this incident would go down in the record books as a "Concealed Weapon" incident for police to drag out at budget time as one of the "alarming statistics" rather than a situation handled sensibly.

Let's all get back to our own business. For the Police this means solving criminal cases, not exaggerating and manipulating stories through the media. For the newspapers it means simply reporting the news and not creating it.

Name withheld in fear of reprisals from the Police.

Editor's Note: In the incident referred to by this letter writer, an Acton youth was spotted by police at 1 a.m. hiding in a walkway between a house and a garage. It was subsequently discovered by police that the youth had a .177 calibre handgun tucked down the front of his pants with just the handle portion exposed.

The Halton Hills HERALD

Home Newspaper of Halton Hills - Established 1866

A Division of Canadian Newspaper Company Limited
45 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 3Z6

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Publisher and General Manager

877-2201

EDITORIAL — COLIN GIBSON, Managing Editor; ROB RISK, Sports Editor
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CIRCULATION — Marie Shadbot

ACCOUNTING — Jennie Hapichuk, Accountant and Inga Shier

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Single Copy (in Stores) 25¢
Halton \$54.00 year
\$28.00 six months
\$18.00 three months
Canada \$90.00 year
\$48.00 six months
\$27.00 three months
Foreign \$170.00 year
\$90.00 six months
\$50.00 three months

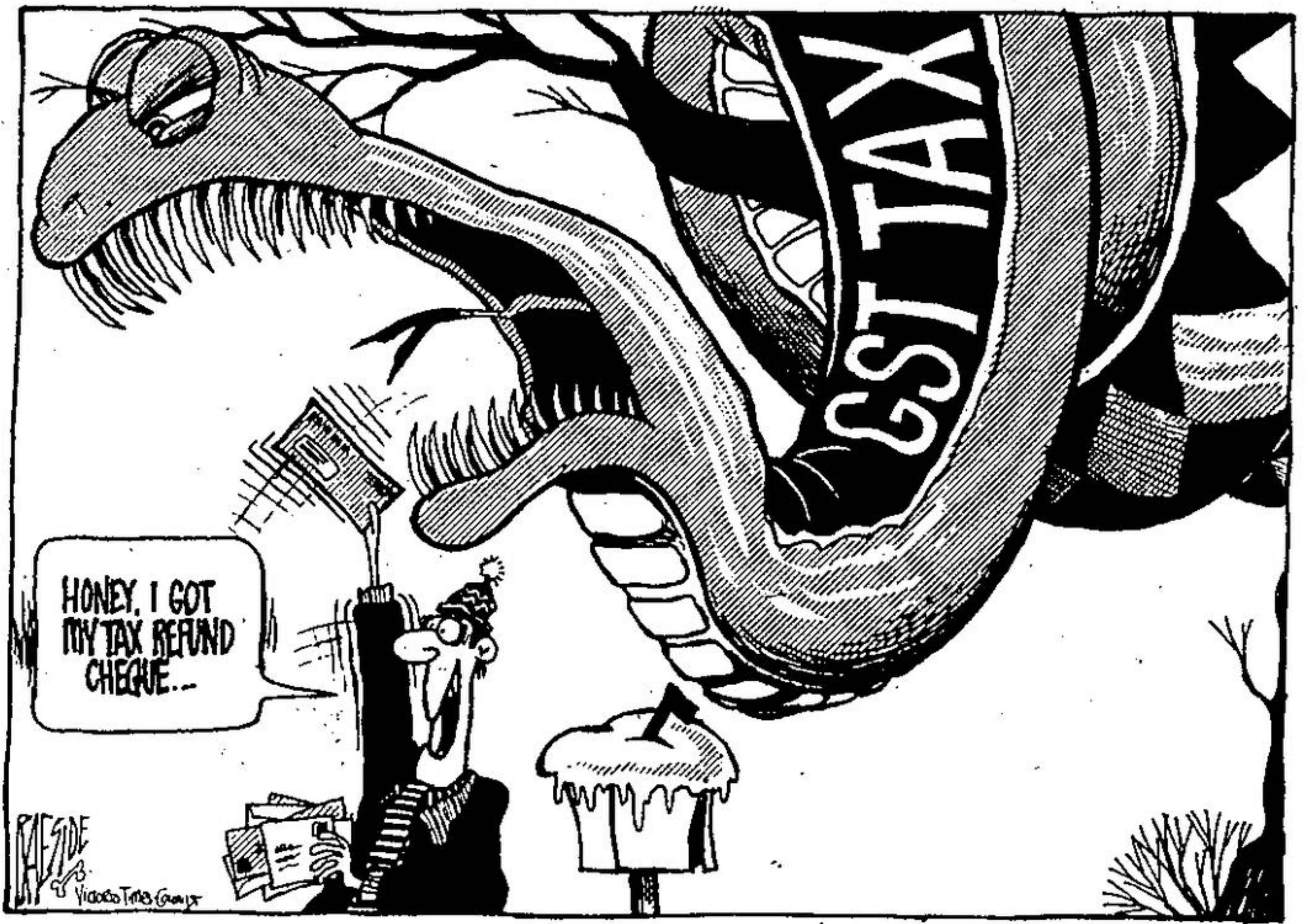
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People's Forum

Duignan challenged by Chamber

Editor's Note: The following letter was released to The Halton Hills Herald for publication.

To: The Editor of The Halton Hills Herald

Open letter to Noel Duignan, M.L.A.
Re: Jumping to Conclusions

I was most interested in reading the published interview you gave Ben Dummett as it appeared in the December 22 Herald. I have determined that the reporter stands by the accuracy of the quotes attributed to you and I have seen no retraction or modification of what was attributed to you. This letter is written on the assumption that the Herald interview accurately reflected your views.

I was particularly interested in reading your comments with respect to your meeting with the Issues Committee of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce as they relate to two issues.

The first of those issues is the Silver Creek Trunk Sewer. I can see where you might have jumped to the conclusion that the Chamber was opposed to an Environmental Assessment (EA) for Silver Creek. But that was not our position. Our position was that before there is an EA or even a request for one the starting point is a review of all of the studies that have been done in the past to first of all determine whether or not there is a need for a full EA. No EA should be undertaken without good reason not only for the cost but because of the inevitable time delays which may prevent a resolution of the

sewage problems in the old part of Georgetown but also further delay development in Georgetown West.

You met with the Issues Committee of the Chamber several weeks ago. Every member of that committee like the vast majority of our members both work in Halton Hills and live here. We do not want to see Silver Creek or any other area destroyed by foolish development. The business community, however, is keenly aware of the need to solve both the sewage problem and for the need for sustainable growth for the maintenance of the standard of living we now enjoy. If there is a demonstrated need for a full EA neither the Chamber of Commerce or the business community will oppose that EA. We simply oppose unwarranted studies designed to impede growth.

I think you jumped to the wrong conclusion.

The second issue is the Maple Avenue Apartment proposal. You said that we agreed to disagree on a number of development issues including the "Maple Avenue Apartment Development."

The fact is that the Chamber of Commerce has never taken a position on that development. The directors have never dealt with the issue and our members have never been canvassed as to their position on that issue. I must therefore conclude that you are disagreeing with the position taken by the majority of those on the Issues Committee with whom you met. I should set out that

position. As a committee we do not have a position. Of the five people on the committee you met with, four of those people to my knowledge do not support that particular proposal and the fifth person has never taken a public position. If you disagree with the majority of the Issues Committee on that proposal you must support that development because we do not.

If I had not read your words, "I believe it's the wrong development in the wrong place" I would have thought that you supported the development because you disagreed with us. I could easily have jumped to the wrong conclusion.

In passing I fail to see how we could agree to disagree on an item that was only mentioned in passing. The Maple Avenue project was only mentioned in a passing reference to another issue. You jumped to the conclusion that the Chamber of Commerce supported the proposal for high-rise condominiums on Maple Avenue - the good Lord alone knows how you did that. The subject was not discussed.

We hope that we can work with you as we have worked with your predecessors. We look forward to discussing development issues, pay equity, Sunday shopping and a host of other issues which are important to our membership. We only ask that you listen to us and make sure you understand our position before you misrepresent it through the press or elsewhere.

David B. Page,
President
Halton Hills Chamber
of Commerce.